



Chemnitz European Capital of Culture 2025

First Monitoring Meeting

Report by the ECOC Expert Panel

Virtual Meeting, 28 September 2021

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Introduction

This report follows the virtual meeting on 28 September 2021 between the Panel and the team of Chemnitz, one of the two European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) in 2025¹. Chemnitz was nominated as the European Capital of Culture 2025 in Germany by the relevant German authorities in January 2021 based on the Panel selection report²; its bid book is available on the Chemnitz2025 website³. This was the first monitoring meeting.

This report is addressed to the ECoC delivery team Chemnitz2025 GmbH and will be published on the European Commission's website⁴.

Attendance

The Panel members:

Else Christensen-Redžepović (Rapporteur), Suvi Innilä and Jorge Cerveira Pinto, appointed by the European Parliament 2021–2023;

Dessislava Gavrilova (Chair), Paulina Florjanowicz and Pierre Sauvageot, appointed by the Council of the EU 2019-2021;

Jelle Burggraaff and Beatriz Garcia, appointed by the European Commission 2020–2022;

Alin Adrian Nica, appointed by the European Committee of the Regions 2019-2021.

Ulrich Raulff, nominated by the relevant German authorities.

For Chemnitz:

Mayor of the City of Chemnitz and President of the Board Chemnitz2025 GmbH;

Interim CEO Chemnitz2025 GmbH;

¹ The European Capitals of Culture action is governed by Decision No 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union for the ECoC titles 2020 to 2033. The Decision provides for three formal monitoring meetings between designated cities and the Panel.

See: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.132.01.0001.01.ENG

² <https://ec.europa.eu/culture/sites/default/files/ecoc2025-germany-selection-report.pdf>

³ <https://chemnitz2025.de/bidbook/documents>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en

Vice President of the Board Chemnitz2025 GmbH;

ECoC 2025 Project Director;

Mayor of Thalheim/Erzgeb, representing the Chemnitz Cultural Region;

Programme Coordinator Chemnitz2025, Cultural Region Chemnitz2025;

Expert for Cultural Planning, Projects and Evaluation Team Chemnitz2025;

Curator Art Collections Chemnitz/Gunzenhauser Museum;

Managing Director Pochen-Biennale and Curator "3000 Garages";

Deputy Director Creative Saxony, responsible for Cross innovation and international relations and Curator "MBA".

Also in attendance were observers from the European Commission (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture) and from the Saxon State Ministry for Science, Culture and Tourism.

Report and video presentation from Chemnitz 2025

In advance of the online monitoring meeting on 28 September 2021, the Chemnitz2025 GmbH team submitted to the European Commission a progress report outlining the steps taken by the organisation following the announcement of the German ECoC final selection in Berlin on 28 October 2020. A 30-minute video recording complementing the report was also submitted.

The video was introduced by the project director and other members of the Chemnitz team. Viewers were brought back to the exhilarating moments of the final selection moment in Berlin on 28 October 2020. From the Hartmann factory, the future headquarters of Chemnitz2025 organisation, the mayor along with the Chemnitz2025 team expressed their full understanding of the Chemnitz2025 vision and the team's mission to deliver. The makers and doers of the city worked with for instance San Sebastian2016, Kaunas2022, Nova Gorica2025 or Tampere (unsuccessful candidate for the 2026 title in Finland) on projects that would take place over the next months. The collective team aims to make Chemnitz2025 a real experience for Chemnitz, Germany and Europe - to make the "Unseen Seen".

The interim CEO and one of the idea generators of the bid for Chemnitz2025 announced that the GmbH of Chemnitz had been formed and the supervisory board elected and already meeting regularly. A temporary location for the working team has been found and the first important contracts have been signed. They include financial agreements with the federal Government, the region of Saxony and the City of Chemnitz. A cooperation agreement with the public broadcasting cooperation MDR has also been signed. The recruiting process is well on its way, including for the programme and managing director positions. Many highly qualified and diverse applications have already been received.

A programme officer explained about the progress on the capacity-building programme that is built by local experts. In order to reap the benefit from best practices in this field, cooperation has been established with the former ECoC in Leeuwarden and the future ECoC in Tartu. The programme consists of three pillars. The first one is the "Makers Ateliers", where amongst different partners also a cooperation with Interarts (as a partner in the EU funded ECoC capacity-building scheme) led to a series of workshops with a focus on project development and digitalisation - being two important aspects resulting from the pandemic experiences as well as crucial factors for facing the digital future. The second pillar of the "Makers Communities" had a difficult start during the lockdowns and had to rely on digital meetings, which later turned into hybrid meetings but now the project partners are able to meet face-to-face. The third pillar, the Internationalisation Programme, is about sending partners to Europe to attend conferences, workshops etc. and to invite partners from outside to brainstorm with local makers and doers. Already an international pilot meeting has been implemented.

From the co-director of Creative Saxony in charge of the flagship project "Makers Business and Arts", the Panel was reminded of the three pillars of the final bid book. The first pillar "Competence Programme" brings together relevant stakeholders to embark on innovative and cross innovation processes. The work on the second pillar of "Maker Hubs - the makers' spaces for experimentation" is on the way by mapping potential spaces in the whole region. Regarding the third pillar of "Creative and Maker Tourism", which is about the co-creation of activities with visitors and tourists in Chemnitz, the team has identified companies, shops and freelancers already developing activities in this field and is carrying out a thorough mapping for the next level of this pillar. Also, in this area international cooperation is sought, such as with Matera on the project "Game of TraCEs" that connects former, current and future ECoCs. Monthly online sessions are conducted to ensure as much input from external capacities from around Europe for the development of this flagship project.

The Prime Minister of the region of Saxony stated the wish of the region to contribute to holding the European Union together through ECoC cooperation with the former Eastern European States that were not founding members of the Union and through the insistence in upholding the common European values of the rule of law, democracy, freedom of speech and human rights - values that the Prime Minister said were non-negotiable.

One of the programme officers reported from the Garage Campus, one of Chemnitz2025's four intervention spaces, where in the past months many workshops and meetings took place to discuss usage scenarios such as education, digital engagement, inclusion and as headquarter for the 3000 garages. An intervention called "Idea Stop" involved citizens who could stop by or write a chat about their input to Chemnitz2025.

Several other projects were mentioned in this video presentation, where research, planning, mapping, venue and partner search, communication, finances etc. are in the making. All in all, the video gives the impression that the preparations for Chemnitz2025 are on track.

Discussion

During the subsequent discussion, the Panel sought clarification on aspects related to Panel recommendations from the final selection report as well as questions arising from the progress report and video submitted by Chemnitz2025. The Panel also touched upon other relevant issues and offered experience and advice. Topics discussed included the following:

The Panel wanted to know what the greatest challenges had been in preparing the ECoC project so far and what the city saw as the greatest achievements after winning the title last October.

- The delegation responded that putting the necessary new structures in place had been the main achievement. Further, signing important financial agreements with all levels of territorial governance, onboarding of new staff - in particular filling key positions - and establishing new international connections are perceived as further key achievements.
- The greatest single challenge reported by the team has been the pandemic. Managing expectations and building capacities are further concrete challenges that are being addressed.

Long-term cultural strategy

The Panel sought clarification on the concept of “Maker Tourism” - how it differs from “creative” tourism, what is meaningful about it and how it can lead to significant legacies for the region.

- The team highlighted their business plans associated with tourism - how much they were planning to change the scene (from an economic & strategic point of view) as a key legacy.
- On the definition of “Maker Tourism”, the team indicated that it was a far more sustainable approach, a concept that goes beyond the notion of “creative tourism” in that it involves actual participation/engagement of the audience/visitor. The team saw this as an innovative approach and they planned to dedicate a conference on this very topic.

The question was raised as to what happened to the references made to Karl-Marx-Stadt and the legacy of Karl Marx as important elements of the bid book, especially given the concerns the panel had raised about it in the selection report.

- The team responded that the Karl Marx theme, as an important element of the city narrative with European resonance, was still in the programme but not yet developed at this stage.

The Panel enquired about the effects of COVID-19 on the long-term strategy and whether the team had felt the need to reconsider the long-term vision given the changes provoked by the pandemic.

- The team responded that COVID-19 related implications had already been integrated into the current strategy. In fact, the team had experienced new opportunities arising such as consolidating networks, an improved feeling of solidarity as well as higher levels of proficiency in digital and hybrid format communication and cooperation. Non-the-least developing a full ECoC programme during times of complete lockdown had been an excellent “training” in crisis management.

The Panel wanted to know how the team foresaw the local players taking on the role as the real change makers over and above the ECoC delivery team, in particular given the aspirations of establishing an art school in the city.

- The team explained that an art school manifesto was being put forward and linked to the Funken Academy concept. This is not

foreseen as just another art school but as a hub that would allow discussions on what the future generation of artists really needs. It is about research & development and working closely with the art scene.

- They went on to explain that at regional level they managed to create a society with more than 30 mayors and local players where content is being developed such as traditional artisanship.

The Panel enquired about the approach to collaborating with Chemnitz University of Technology on a contract that runs out in 2022, without explanation on who would lead on evaluation in the following years. Further, the Panel asked about how the university related to the Chemnitz Monitor & Saxony panel.

- The Panel responded that the University of Chemnitz was a key partner collaborating with the ECoC team on exploring concepts that make most sense for Chemnitz and the region in the long run. An example of such collaboration is the “Silent Middle” concept, where relevant aspects such as the feeling of belonging, democracy and other desired insights into this project are adapted into the data setting mechanisms to collect the necessary data.
- On the Chemnitz monitor, it was explained that it focused on the city and region starting in 2022, ahead of the regional data collection.
- The Saxony panel is explained as covering a broader area involving the universities of Leipzig and Dresden. This work also involves already existing programmes and is set up with an ECoC dimension to later continue in general terms as a legacy.
- As for the contract with the University of Chemnitz seemingly only until the end of 2022, it was explained that this was a purely administrative matter, as the contract was expected to be extended beyond 2022. The Chemnitz Monitor was quickly initiated on a short-term contract in order to capture the first rounds of evaluations on the “European Maker” festival over the summer. Towards the end of 2022, work on the Saxony panel will commence.

Artistic and cultural programme

The Panel referred to the political climate in Chemnitz and the recent elections to the Bundestag. In the light of the election results, the Panel asked if the team still thought this was a “fluid” phenomenon, which could be addressed with the soft concept of a “silent middle”. The Panel also wanted to know whether the Chemnitz2025 team had been directly

challenged by radical right wing groups, how they communicated with them and their followers and whether the team was cooperating with federal organizations such as the “Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung”.

- Regarding the concept of the “silent middle” and its relevance in today’s Europe, the mayor of Chemnitz underlined that it was possible - and important - to enter into a real dialogue with a large part of those voters giving their votes to the radical right and to promote in this way European values also through artistic expressions. So far, there is neither input nor resistance to ECoC activities from their side. The delegation also explained the concept of the “democracy platform” and its links to capacity building and the cultural programme. Finally, the “Bundeszentrale” works as a relevant consultant to the team. Security issues and risk assessments are high on the agenda, as the team is well aware that ECoC activities may be overturned and misused.

Given the current political situation in the city and region, the Panel asked whether the team thought that the principles of non-political cultural spaces for interaction and civic participation could be challenged or generate conflicts. Further, the Panel wanted to know whether, according to the team, there might be a risk of appropriation of the project by individuals opposing or challenging some of the core European democratic values and principles.

- The team expressed the view that the risk was minimal and added that the ECoC programme contained many strong projects addressing this issue with many discussions, exhibitions and performances that would also highlight the core EU values and build trust in the ECoC projects and in the EU.

The Panel enquired how the team managed the interim period during which they were awaiting the appointments of a new CEO and a new head of programme and therefore not in a position to make decisions on, for instance, the overall artistic vision, new project ideas, the work with the current curators and the budgetary distribution within the cultural programme. The Panel also sought clarification on the fact that - according to the progress report - while the main flagship projects were on their way, the final decision on which projects from the bid book would be chosen for the final cultural programme would be made in summer 2023. The Panel expressed concerns that these uncertainties might cause substantial changes to the programme as presented in the bid book.

- The Chemnitz team reassured the Panel that 80% of the bid book programme will be implemented and that the team took the *de facto*

status of the final bid book very seriously. The new head of programme will have an approximately 20% space for development as well as the opportunity to boost existing projects. Moreover, in the announcements for the vacancies for the top positions in the Chemnitz2025 organisation, the fact that the final bid book is a *de facto* contract with the European Commission has been made very clear. The team concluded that they were on track, that flagship projects as described in the final bid book would remain and that there would be no significant changes.

The Panel went on to enquire about the development of the artistic vision behind the 3000 garages, as this is very much a grass-root project. Further, the Panel asked for more insights into the “creative tourist” concept.

- The Chemnitz team explained that the new head of programme would be tasked with further developing the artistic vision for the 3000 garages project. For now, one of the stations - a former tram depot - has been made into the Garage Campus and the first events have already taken place - Open Garage events - and a comprehensive mapping of garages is also in the making.
- “Creative tourism” is a new tourism concept that implies a more co-productive interaction between visitors and local makers over just being a passive spectator. Co-creative works could be working on souvenirs in for instance work with wood, textiles etc. “Creative tourism” is now gaining strong attention globally, and Chemnitz2025 reported that they were in contact with Matera and other partners in Europe.

The Panel went on to enquire about how the Chemnitz2025 team dealt with the notion of sustainability in for instance the garages or the “Purple Path” projects and in general how the topic of climate change was being addressed and communicated to young people in a way that seems scientifically serious and politically convincing.

- The team reported that they were closely following the New European Bauhaus initiative launched by the European Commission and that overall, they took a very holistic view on sustainability, which is clearly expressed in the final bid book. Sustainability is a priority in the capacity-building programme and best practises in this respect are taken from the cultural and creative industry sector for instance when it comes to green filming, green festivals, green clubbing or even sustainable textiles and circular designs.
- Further, the Panel learnt from the team that in fact it was a joint effort of both the city of Chemnitz and the Chemnitz2025 organisation to

adhere to sustainability strategies drafted for both and that the sustainability element was regarded as being one of the strong legacy elements of Chemnitz2025.

The Panel expressed interest in hearing about the further development of the concept of the “Makers”, as this was still in its infancy in the final selection phase.

- The team responded that the “Makers” concept still needed to be fully developed. They have a good idea and definition of what a “Maker” constitutes but the artistic concept must be left for the new head of programme to work out. The interim team have had a few interventions with some Makers but with the lockdown situation, this has been rather limited.

European dimension:

The Panel wanted to know how the digital Maker Space had been developed since the selection phase and when it would be ready to invite European Makers on board?

- The team reported that work on the European Makers was in progress and that they had a roadmap for this. There have been exchanges with stakeholders and the website is foreseen to have a hybrid eco sphere. This will be piloted next year. Building hybrid local and European Makers and a hackathon for the Makers space are envisioned next year.

The Panel wanted to have a deeper insight into the work in progress on the European dimension - establishment of partnerships with European and beyond Europe networks and specific European dimension activities intended to work on in the time before the next monitoring meeting.

- The Mayor reported that a delegation from Saxony went to Prague and that first practical conversations had taken place with relevant cultural, tourism and institutional partners in the Czech Republic. The Mayor will also go to Nova Gorica and Finland soon. It was underlined that the team saw great importance in bringing people from Europe to Chemnitz to experience everyday life in the city and to share values across differences. Further concrete action plans are being developed with the Czech Republic in the areas of tourism and peer learning. An exhibition called European Realism is being curated focusing on the extreme right-wing movement across Europe. The European dimension is viewed by the team as one of the cornerstones in the legacy of Chemnitz2025.

Outreach:

When a city is chosen as an ECoC, all the inhabitants are proud. However, citizens may not always fully understand what an ECoC means. How will the Chemnitz team truly engage the citizens and how will it measure the real impact of the inhabitants' involvement as well as the level of citizens' ownership of the project?

- The team explained that due to the pandemic lockdowns it had not been possible to celebrate the magic moments of winning the title and engaging with the public on what this title entailed. However, the team is confident that this engagement in Chemnitz2025 and ownership of the project will evolve over time.

The Panel asked whether the team was working on gaining new knowledge on digital audience development and whether it was partnering with experts elsewhere in Europe and the world on this important aspect of the ECoC - non-the-least in the light of the pandemic and prospects of possible times of lockdowns calling for alternative ways of building and engaging with audiences.

- The team reported that they had held and were planning more capacity-building sessions - also in relation to the digital field. Contact was made with Wroclaw on audience development.

The Panel referred to the team's report where it emphasizes that there is no wish to divide people into "us" and "them". The Panel asked whether there was not a risk of excluding from scratch some part of the population supporting extreme-right ideas, in contradiction with the general concept of inclusiveness supported by the bid book. How is the team addressing this risk?

- The team responded that the community in Chemnitz was not divided. The basketball events in the arena on weekends demonstrate inclusiveness with more than 5000 visitors from across the whole community and across political differences. However, it also admitted that it would not be possible to reach everybody though all efforts would be made to reach out to as many people as possible.

Management:

The Panel sought clarification on how the team planned to maintain engagement and involvement of the citizens in the ECoC project. What marketing and communication tools are being used for this? Further, the Panel asked when the team planned to finalise the marketing and communication strategy and start implementing it.

- The team responded that the marketing strategy was divided into two parts. The first one runs from now until 2023 and the second part will be launched with the publishing of the Chemnitz2025 programme at the end of 2023.
- Guidelines are developed to reach people in Chemnitz and the region with information on what the ECoC is. International experts in the field will work side by side with local experts on this task. Many people in Chemnitz know about the ECoC title being awarded to the city and now the biggest challenge in the communication is managing expectations.
- There is a lot of enthusiasm for the ECoC projects, the maker atelier and maker community in Chemnitz. The team has received a lot of positive feedback from the community on SoMe on these activities.

The Panel was interested in understanding how the management structure composed of a unit at the mayor's office and a GmbH - both being responsible for parts of the ECoC project - would work.

- The team responded that this structure was put in place in order to better prepare the municipality for the implementation of the ECoC through positive interactions with the GmbH. This structure will also equip the municipality with the capacities necessary to carry through the ECoC legacy projects.

The Panel wanted to know how soon the Chemnitz team was planning to develop and implement the strategy for internal communication and communication on the regional, national, and European levels as a coherent communication strategy is vital for the success of a well-functioning and successful delivery team.

- The team informed the Panel that the new CEO and head of communication would oversee this process. Valuable discussions on this vital task have already taken place with communication people from the Leeuwarden 2018 and Aarhus 2017 ECoCs. One aspect of the internal communication is ensuring that the Chemnitz city staff are learning about the work of Chemnitz2025 hands on along the way.

The Panel wanted to know if Chemnitz2025 had considered making any changes in the staffing plan to better reflect the extensive bottom-up nature of the cultural programme.

- The Chemnitz2025 team responded that this was indeed a key question as the current situation was somewhat different to the time of the conception of the bid in 2018-2019. The team now faces a new

digital reality, and the staffing will need to adapt to this situation. The Chemnitz2025 Company will not employ 200-300 people, but is working together with stakeholders on identifying capacities for the tasks ahead. Curators are more or less in place but the company needs more digital capacities and international profiles.

Capacity to deliver:

The Panel wanted to know about the Chemnitz team's cooperation with, for instance, the Leeds 2023 team (a legacy of the interrupted bid to become UK ECoC 2023) and the "ECoC family" networks.

- The team reported on the importance and benefits of having met physically with the Kaunas2022 team and the whole ECoC family in September 2021. This exchange on best practises was seen as a very valuable learning experience for the Chemnitz2025 team. Topics covered in the most recent meeting was ECoC and the pandemic, hybrid programming, capacity building and audience engagement. The Chemnitz team looks forward to working with all ECoCs on the preparations for the 40 years anniversary of ECoC in 2025.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Panel welcomes the high level of professionalism in the Chemnitz2025 team regarding the planning process, as evidenced by their report and presentation. It acknowledges the solid progress made by the team already at this stage in the preparations. The Panel would like to offer the following conclusions and recommendations for the Chemnitz2025 team:

Long-term strategy:

1. The Panel encourages the team to revisit the concerns raised by the Panel with regard to the Karl-Marx-Stadt and Karl Marx' legacy in the selection report: "To approach Karl Marx' philosophy, featured most especially in "Thinking Marx Globally", is understandable in terms of reviewing the city's cultural heritage, yet it is missing an in-depth analysis on the causes and effects of communism and the related role of philosophers and writers, such as Karl Marx.

2. The team underlines its "Eastern" heritage but without giving it enough thought. It comes out more as a potential tourist attraction than an actual topic for discussion and artistic exploitation. This is considered at this stage to be still too superficial an approach.

Artistic and cultural programme:

3. The current moment in the ECoC preparations could be used to better involve artists in the design of the programme and some of its projects, without waiting until 2025 to present them. Long-term residencies during which artists are in contact with local people, pupils and social groups can bring out original projects aimed at people who are not usually involved in culture.

4. The Panel recommends a continuous refinement and interrogation of the concept of “Makers”. While potentially highly interesting, the concept may also be viewed merely as a ‘trendy’ term in 2021 and can be used to mean almost anything. The Chemnitz team could be in a position to take a leading role and make a significant contribution to the understanding of the “Maker Culture”: for this, it is essential to be sharper on what is meant by “Maker Culture” and how this translates into specific actions across all areas: from approach to strategy & evaluation, to programming, outreach and management. At present, the use of the term is still vague and replaceable by other terms - e.g. the distinction between creative tourism & maker tourism. Addressing this must become a priority, for the Chemnitz proposal to be fully convincing and original.

European dimension:

5. The Panel welcomes the programming segments that aim at bridging East and West. The Panel recommends that due attention is given to understanding the differences in mentality of the different parts of the wider region. In terms of engaging people, the Panel recommends focusing what unifies over what divides people and always with attention to exploring the root causes of the problems that divide. This work should be embarked on soon - well ahead of the title year.

6. In relations to the planned celebration of the upcoming (2025) 80th anniversary of the end of WWII as “80th anniversary of freedom in Europe”, the Panel recommends taking a wider perspective on this anniversary as the notion of “freedom” in respect of the events of 1945 is only true for the Western part of Europe. For Central and Eastern Europe, it is both untrue and potentially offending, as the end of WWII did not correspond to the advent of freedom in this part of the continent.

7. On the European dimension front, more work needs to be done to demonstrate a capacity for engagement beyond Chemnitz’s immediate region & Eastern European connections.

Management:

8. The Panel recommends drafting clear lines and definitions of areas of responsibilities between the GmbH and the unit at the Municipality in charge of Chemnitz2025, to avoid potential conflict and overlaps of authority.

Outreach:

9. Encouraging efforts are planned to attract the large group of extreme right-wing supporters - especially through sporting events. The Panel recommends going one level deeper in trying to truly understand the underlying motivation for the political choices these people are making. It is necessary to understand the differences in values that are or are not shared. The feeling of togetherness deriving from sporting events is a good starting point, but it should go deeper than that. The Panel recommends looking into finding creative ways to address the popularity of extreme right-wing views amongst fellow citizens without ostracising those people.

10. The Panel recommends that care must be taken to continuously working on ensuring inclusiveness: to be careful with the language used when referring to people's political inclinations - such as not equating right-wing inclinations with the far right/extreme right (while never mentioning issues associated with other extremisms, on the left, for instance). Being self-aware about potential personal biases within the team/key stakeholders is crucial for inclusiveness. In this respect, the way the team refers to "them" as opposed to "us" may be seen as limiting the ambition of inclusiveness, which the team wants to promote, to those who think alike and share the same values, views and concepts.

Capacity to deliver:

11. Although the team answered convincingly in their preparedness to deal with possible political risks and riots, the Panel recommends that risk management and mitigation strategies and plans be continuously updated.

Next Steps

The Panel welcomes the progress made by the Chemnitz2025 team over the past eleven months since the final selection in October 2020 and remains available for questions and advice, through the European Commission services.

The Commission will call for a second monitoring meeting in mid-2023.

The Panel would like to thank the Mayor of Chemnitz and the team of Chemnitz2025 for a fruitful discussion on the progress of the Chemnitz2025 preparations and looks forward to the next developments of the Chemnitz European Capital of Culture project.

(Signed) all attending Panel's members

